

Character Studies 2

(The stories continue)
"Voices from the Upper Gutter"

"Something that could happen to You in Lowell"

Danny Dupa

Danny Dupa hadn't always been Vito Vaselini's sidekick / confidante. He was once a little angry boy, a long time ago. His family lived in a one-room apartment in Lowell, at 201 Middlesex Street. His father left home when he was nine months old. It was only him, his mother Charlotte, and the two dozen cats his mother kept in the room. Although the room was rather large, it always smelled of cat urine. His mother worked as a waitress, part-time. Most of the rest of the time she would spend in a bar called Simone's Hideaway, working as a hooker. Sometimes she would bring drunks home.

Danny and his mother Charlotte lived in that room on the top floor from the time he was two years old, until he moved out of the house when he was fourteen. He used to sleep in Salvation Army boxes. If it didn't have any clothes in it, he was fucked.

Lowell had a lot of rooming houses back then, and Danny would sleep in the community bathrooms at night. In some places people let him sleep, other places they'd piss on him and go back to bed. This was better than living at home with his mother and the cats.

The one room only had one bed, and he slept in that bed the whole time he lived in that room with his mother. When she brought home a drunk, he either slept in the bed, or on the floor. It was uncomfortable for him to be in that bed when his mother was having sex with these guys. After a while he would simply get out of bed and sleep on the floor. He would hold onto his pillow and pretend it was someone who really cared for him and wanted to hold him -- something he had never gotten from his mother. She was never physically abusive, but constantly degraded him verbally. He was told he was an oaf constantly by his mother.

Some of the men would stay over for a day or two. Some would act like a father figure and give him commands, like "Hey, oaf, go get me a beer." One man stayed there for over three weeks. His mother got along with him for the maximum two or three days, and they constantly fought the rest of the time he lived there. His name was Pete, and he was an all right guy. He worked on a construction crew. He drank but he wasn't mean when he got drunk. He was the first man in Danny Dupa's life that stayed with his mother that called him "Danny" and not "oaf."

Danny's mother was always watching TV -- when she wasn't at the bar. She watched soap operas. She had a restless spirit

One day something in Danny told him it was time to leave. It may have been the same old dirty, filthy, pissy, shitty sheet that he had been sleeping on for the past three weeks. It may have been because Pete left. He could no longer go to school. He felt embarrassed by what he had to wear. His mother had started to go whacko -- in alcoholic terms, I think it's referred to as "wet brain." Now for the first time in his life, she was hitting him. Through the years, Danny had developed a mean streak like his mother. And when she came at him that day, screaming and swinging, and hitting him several dozen times, he finally snapped. He whacked her six times in the face. As she was lying on the floor, he got down on his knees, opened his mouth and took a deep breath, and bit off part of her nose as she lay there convulsing.

So you can see how, for Danny, living in hallways when he first moved out was better than living at home.

One day as he was walking down Middlesex Street, going past Garnick's Music Store, he stopped and looked in the window. A man inside motioned with his hand for Danny to come in. His name was Dave Garnick. He was a repairman and delivery man at the music store. For some reason, Danny came in -- there was music playing. Something changed in Danny when he heard that music. The music was different, but the effect was the same as music had on Frankenstein's monster. It was disco.

Dave Garnick was a friendly guy and he started to talk with Danny about what music he was interested in -- he was trying to make a sale. Danny said, "I don't know -- whatta you got?" Dave said, "How do you like what's playing now," and he started to dance. Danny started to dance a little bit -- well, he was moving around.

At that time, Garnick's Music Store was the hot place to buy records in Lowell. They always had young girls working the counter who were there more for looks than intelligence. I think it was a ploy to keep young people coming in. Sometimes you'd see three different girls in one year.

Dave Garnick was always a character, and the girl who worked there at the time named Pam was looking at Dave and Dupa dancing, in awe and disbelief.

The song stopped and Dave asked Danny what he did. Danny said, "I hang around and I look for things. Sometimes I find them, sometimes I don't." Dave Garnick took this as a mystical sign, a mystical sentence. Dave asked him if he wanted to wash the windows once a week to make a couple of bucks. Robert, his brother, who actually owned the business, gave Dave a look like "What are you doing?" Dave gave him a hand sign and a look like he was saying, "Don't worry about it." Danny asked how much would it pay. Dave said, "It'll probably take you an hour, and I'll give you three bucks." Danny asked if he would have to buy records with the money. Dave said, "No, and maybe we'll have some scratched records that you can have for free." Danny said, "I ain't got no record player." Dave said, "You do a good job, and

we'll see about getting you one." Danny said to Dave, "Well, I gotta get going and go find something." Dave asked what he had to find. Danny said, "I don't know. I ain't found it yet." Dave said, "Come back in a week, and I'll have the stuff for you to clean the windows."

Danny started to walk out the door when Dave called him back and said, "Hey kid, where you living?" Danny said, "In the hallway in the rooming house above Tower News." Dave optimistically said, "Well kid, I hope they got an electrical outlet in that hallway, cause someday I'm gonna get you a record player."

Vito Vaselini

I think to better understand Vito Vaselini you would have to know something about his father, Vinnie Vaselini.

Vinnie Vaselini was born and grew up in Lawrence, Massachusetts, a couple towns over from Lowell. Vinnie's whole life was controlled by sexual satisfaction -- he lived for porno. From his earliest days, he could be found walking along the river, looking for discarded porno magazines. When he was a teenager he used to sneak into the rest area on 110 in Methuen to watch and listen to the couples going at it. He could never control himself and would always be masturbating. Sometimes the people in the car would hear him masturbating, and they would come out and the guy would chase him and kick the shit out of him. His pants would be down -- of course, he'd run a couple of feet before he'd fall. It was impossible to masturbate with his fly down -- he couldn't get a good enough grip.

After years of being too daring, and getting the shit kicked out of him a half a dozen times, Vinnie became a tough fuck. He got a job at a gas station called West Gate Gulf in Haverhill that had a peep-out. (A peep-out is some method to look inside a ladies' bathroom without them knowing.) This one was located between the stall and the sink in an air vent in the ceiling. Wes, the owner, found it years before. It had an old one-gallon oil can on top of the grate so you couldn't look in. Word got around that there was a peep-out in this gas station. That's why Vinnie got the job there. It would be one of the few legitimate jobs he held in his whole life.

The hottest time at the peep-out was when women were changing their bathing suits after coming back from Salisbury beach. Although Vinnie didn't make much money, he'd be slipping the other attendant that was on duty a couple of bucks so he could go an peep the women out.

Now let's get to Vinnie's home life with Vito.

Vinnie was a sexual predator on himself. He could not control his

masturbation. He would sometimes masturbate seven times in one day. Whenever he got aroused from a young woman, or sometimes an older woman, or pornography, or even a fantasy popping into his head, he had to masturbate. If he wasn't home, or someplace safe that he knew, he would have to go in a bathroom in some public building. Those were the hard times. He'd be into it, trying to be quiet, and not obvious, and someone would come in, and wash their hands, or worse yet, they would want to use the stall. Any sudden noise would throw him off. If he couldn't finish, it would drive him insane. Sometimes he would have to run in the woods. It was like being Superman. One minute you're mild-mannered, thinking about life -- the next minute you got this sexual urge that had to be satisfied.

Vinnie was a loner all his life. He had been with a number of prostitutes, a couple one-night stands with women he would pick up at a bar called the Tangerine Lounge. But these were bar-sluts -- drunk, some were over forty, but most were over fifty, and they always made him feel like they were doing him a favor. And in a way, they were.

He had a sister named Myrtle who was twenty-six. She worked hard all her life in the shoe shops in Haverhill. Remember, this is going back to the early 1950's. Myrtle got raped and had a baby. His name was Vito. He was five years old when his mother died, and he went to live with his uncle, Vinnie, where he would remain until he moved out on his own approximately ten years later.

Now we're getting a clear picture of Vito's early childhood with his uncle, Vinnie. Only thing is, he never called him "Uncle Vinnie" because he was always told that Vinnie was his father, not his uncle. Around Lawrence, in Methuen, it became a rumor that he had slept with his own sister. He let it grow and let people believe. And although he was a slime-bag, and a chronic masturbator--today you would call it sex addiction--he was preserving the honor of his sister being raped. But it was mostly to make people not think that the only women he could get were drunken women over forty or fifty, or prostitutes.

Vinnie and Vito lived in an apartment in Lawrence above a small variety store named Lafferty's. It was a two-room apartment -- well three, if you include the bathroom. Vinnie was set up in the bedroom. He collected pornography and he wasn't ashamed of it. He would have long counters with issues of his favorite mags, which he bought under the table.

When Myrtle died and Vito moved in with Vinnie, he had a reach a somewhat higher level responsibility. So he started collecting metal and things to sell at the junkyard: copper, aluminum, five-cent coke bottles. He would spend his mornings walking the alleyways of Essex Street, to forge out a living for his son. Some days he would make five dollars, some days he'd make two dollars. On a good day he'd make ten, and him and Vito would have pizza that night. He was Italian, well, at least half, and damn proud of it.

Vinnie finally got a job at the city dump where he would work for the

rest of his life, which would only be another ten years. He worked for a time in the incinerator room, but unfortunately he got demoted and had to work in the yard. It happened that the section he was in charge of was full of toxic waste, which he eventually would die from. Then they gave him the job of burning the plastic, and he'd look at that flame, so fascinated with the fire and the melting of the plastic that the fumes didn't even affect him, apparently, until he died of black lung.

Although he made steady pay, Vinnie spent it all on pornography. Now he had an 8mm movie camera, and he used to try to impress some of other guys from the dump who liked to drink beer and watch porno by inviting them over to his pad. He would have to masturbate before they came over so he could at least control himself for an hour while watching the films.

Little Vito grew up in this atmosphere, and wanted it, and hated it at the same time. He saw what this impulse was doing to his father. His father always smoked cigarettes, which made him cough even worse. I'm sure that contributed to his black lung disease. When Vito started to live with Vinnie, he was five and starting elementary school. Vinnie still hadn't gotten his dream job at the city dump, so they were struggling for a couple of years yet. Vinnie was allowed to rummage through the trash, and his apartment was filled with broken things that would never be fixed. Empty dreams, and the only thing that Vinnie would pass on to Vito when he died.

For those first two years, Vito never had nice clothes to wear to school. His father would make him a bologna sandwich or two. Most of the time he have a glass of water with his sandwiches. When his father had money, he'd have milk. When he was seven, almost eight, his father got that steady job, and he no longer had to crawl into Salvation Army boxes to find his clothes. His father took him to the Salvation Army store to *buy* the clothes. They weren't the greatest -- sometimes he'd have to get shoes that didn't fit, that were maybe a little small. It was an upper gutter existence. To be in the gutter is one thing, but when you reach your hand up on the curb and start to lift yourself up, anything could happen.

Some people, they would develop pride. But Vito developed arrogance instead. The world owed him something and he was going to get it. He never had any friends in school. He never had the opportunity to take a bath at home, cause his uncle, or rather, his father, was always in the bathroom masturbating. At least he had the dignity to take it out of his bedroom.

The last five years of his life, Vinnie became a loner. The porno came out from under the counter, and he became a connoisseur like you wouldn't believe. He got into foreign porn, nudist magazines. He would spend one quarter of his paycheck on his rent, \$25, half on porno, \$50, and the other \$25 for food and Vito.

Vito didn't know anything else. He thought this must be the way everybody lived. But he knew deep down inside that wasn't true, because the other kids in school seemed to have possibilities, and friends, and families who cared about them. The neighborhood his father and him lived in

was a den of poverty, porno, prostitution, and a couple of pizza parlors. Oh yeah, and a small variety store on the corner.

When Vito was ten years old, he started smoking pot. He started drinking like the old man, but he didn't like the way he would lose control. He had an anger and a desperation in life. A need to be creative. A need to be somebody, more than the son of a dump-picker.

When Vito was almost fifteen, he and his father started to argue a lot. Vito wanted his independence. The old man would say, "Where the fuck you gonna go? You don't do nothin', you don't know nothin', you ain't nothin', you ain't gonna be anything."

His father would only say this when he was drunk and in a bad mood. Or having a porno shortage. That was the main thing that made him snap. It would happen once or twice a month, usually on a Friday after he'd get paid and be itching to buy new porn. His fascination became an obsession.

This instance was one of the worst his father ever had. He was over six days since his father had a new porno fix. He was into color porno 8mm now. His porno obsession had driven him, as it does with some people, into an addictive situation: to never be satisfied, and always be looking for new material, you might call it virgin material, because they have never seen it before. Vinnie had been promised a film, a Swedish lesbian film, with four lesbians, in color, doing everything. He had never seen anything like this in his life, on film. He had seen two women and one man, and the two women go at it a little bit. But never all women. His dream fantasy would come true. He would be able to pretend to be any one of the participants in the film, and as it would turn out, this image would become embedded in his brain up until the moment he died.

After that fight, Vito left the house, and went to sleep in a Salvation Army box. He knew the ones that had clothes in them and were warm. It was winter time. He didn't have a friend's house to go to. Once in his life he had one person that wanted to be his friend, but Vito didn't want to take a chance. He wanted to make it one his own. Not pride, arrogance.

He slept in that Salvation Army box for a week. The longest he had been out of the house before was two days. By this time, he didn't bother going to school. He lived out of trash cans. He went in restaurants and tried to look inconspicuous -- and for him, that was virtually impossible -- and ate the food left on people's plates. He could've had a job as a dishwasher at a small diner on the other side of town, Lawson's Diner, where he would eat food at night when it was late. The waitress knew he was hard-up after the second night, and let him eat the table scraps. The owner, a good Italian man named Angelo, offered him a job as a dishwasher, but his pride, or rather his arrogance, told Vito that this was beneath him. The world would see him as a prominent figure. He may have been told he was a nothing, but at least he was going to be his own nothing.

On the seventh day after leaving home, he decided to go home and see if his father was still pissed off. When he got home, he walked up the stairs to the two-room apartment, three if you count the bathroom. He was

stopped by the landlady across the hall, a Polish lady, who said, "Vito, where you been?" "What do you care?" said Vito. "Didn't you hear what happened to your father?" Vito said, "No, what happened?" Suddenly panic erupted in Vito. He had that queasy feeling in his stomach. "They took your father to the hospital three days ago. He's very sick -- they say he's gonna die."

Vito walked into the apartment. He felt empty. He clenched his fist, wondering what he would do now. The living room was full of all the junk his father had collected, hanging on the walls, stacked up in the corners, lying around everywhere. He walked into his father's bedroom and saw it empty of all his pornographic things -- there was only his father's bed, and a couple of Playboys.

He walked out the apartment door, he knew he had to go see his father, he didn't want to, but he felt he had to. The landlady told him when he came out, that his father's friends at the city dump had come by after his father went to the hospital and taken his pornography.

Vito goes to Lawrence General Hospital. He has never been in a hospital before, and feels even more awkward than he does in life. He doesn't even know who to ask. He walks in and asks a lady in the gift shop where his father is. She tells him to go to the desk. He finds out his father is in the ICU on the fifth floor. He goes there, goes to the nursing station, and asks for his father, room 514.

The nurse asks Vito who he is, and he says, "I'm his kid." Now he is flooded with emotion. The nurse tells him what condition his father is in, it's critical, he has lung cancer in his extremely advanced stages. His father had been looking thin lately, but Vito thought he wasn't eating enough, and masturbating too much, if there was such a thing.

Vito asks if he can see him. The nurse says yes and takes him to the room. His father is lying in bed barely conscious. Vito walks to the bed, and looks at his father's face.

His father's eyes open, and he says, "Vito, I'm glad you came, son. I've got somethin' I gotta tell you. I'm real sick, dead sick. Don't bother coming back to see me again, 'cause I'm not gonna be here, I'm probably gonna be dead. My only regret is, I'm too weak to masturbate one more time.

"But Vito, I got somethin' else I gotta tell you. I ain't your father. I'm your uncle."

Vito says, "Am I a child of incest?"

His uncle says, "No, and don't let anybody ever tell you that you are. Your mother got raped and had you, and then she died. But I want you to know somethin'. I've been calling you a nothing all your life. That's because I didn't want you to become a nothing, like me. You can be something in life, Vito. I don't know what, but you've got some crazy impulses flashing around in your brain, and you might as well use them."

For the first time in Vito's life, he started to cry. Just a little. He said to his uncle, "You'll always be my old man."

Vinnie looked at his son one last time and said, "Vito, get out that door, get out of this town, make something of yourself, and don't look back."

Vito starts to leave, but his father stops him and says two more things. "I had to sell all my porno to the guys at the dump to pay some gambling debts. You never knew about my gambling, Vito, and I hoped you never would. So take my advice, and don't gamble. And the other thing -- you're the sole heir to all my belongings, Vito, all that good stuff I collected all my life. It's yours."

Vito walked out that door at that moment, because he knew it was something that he had to do. He went back to the apartment where his father had lived, took his clothes and his few belongings -- a baseball glove he would someday use -- his father found it at the dump and gave it to him when he was eight years old. He takes one last look at the living room, deciding if there is anything else of his father's he should take -- or rather, his uncle's. He saw a dirty black comb that his father had always prized. It was the first good thing he found at the dump, years before. Vito put it in his pocket, and left that apartment and left Lawrence forever. He migrated to Lowell and got a job at the porno shop, Tower News. A new beginning for Vito.

He bought the Lawrence Tribune for the next week, looking for his father's obituary. He thought maybe they wouldn't even bother to put it in. But on the eighth day, he saw it. It read: "Vinnie Vaselini. Died at Lawrence General Hospital at 2:45 a.m., of cardiac arrest. He was a city worker, employed at the city dump. He is survived by a son, Vito."

Vito and Dupa
("Scratch" and "Sniff")

Vito comes to Lowell. He's nineteen years old. He's never had a job. He has no idea how he's going to survive, but he knows he will. He has to. Vito has a destiny, a purpose in life. What that purpose was, was still unknown. He thought to himself that he was never gonna be called a nothing again.

He had never worked a job, so he didn't know what he was going to do that day when he came into Lowell on that bus. He walked around town scoping out the area -- he had never been to Lowell before. The low-lifes of Lowell would hang out on Appleton Street and Gorham Street, where there was a porno shop.

Vito had twenty bucks in his pocket his old man had given him. He stopped at Elliott's and got two Lincolns -- the term used there for a hotdog with relish on the bottom and mustard on top. That night he slept in a Salvation Army box, but there weren't any clothes in it. That was alright, because it was summer. But when he woke up at 11 o'clock the next morning, it was hot as an oven in there. He took off his pants and took off his underwear because he had shit his pants overnight. He left them in the corner of the box, and climbed out. This was the day that he was going to start making something of himself.

Two weeks before his father died, Vito had dropped out of the ninth grade. He was nineteen. He had stayed back once in the eighth grade, and two times in the ninth. In that ninth grade, Vito was already thinking of selling drugs to make money. So now he's in Lowell, and he goes off to face his first full day in the city.

Now that same day, it so happened that Danny Dupa was washing the windows at Garnick's Music Store. He had been doing it for a couple of months, and doing a decent job. He never spoke too much, but he was always smoking cigarettes. He used to roll them himself, from canned tobacco, Bugler. He had smoked heavily since he was nine years old. Sometimes he would cough so hard he would vomit. He had never been breast-fed by his mother, and this was an oral substitution -- he didn't know it, but it was.

After washing windows that day and getting his three dollars from Dave Garnick -- who besides doing sales and service, was also the repair specialist -- Dupa bought a root beer from the tonic machine for 25 cents, walked outside to the front of the store, took a long hard swig of the root beer, and looked out into Lowell, contemplating his next move.

Dupa turns and starts to walk aimlessly up Middlesex Street with the tonic in his hand, half empty. He walks up Elliott Street to Elliott's Diner, and sees a guy sitting on the bench eating a hotdog. As Dupa is walking by Vito, Vito asks him for a cigarette. Dupa silently sits next to Vito and rolls a Bugler

cigarette from a small Bugler rolling machine that Dave Garnick had bought him for sweeping out the store. As he's rolling the cigarette, Vito is looking at him. Dupa passes him the cigarette, and Vito lights it. Dupa rolls one for himself, and lights up.

Although it's only one or two minutes in actual time, Dupa has a thought of his mother. She took off. He had not seen her since she left that fateful day that he bit a piece of her nose off. Some people said that she moved up north. But years later they found out that she had been murdered by a big fat black man.

Dupa didn't have his mother, but now at least he had a friend, Dave Garnick. Dave Garnick wasn't the type of guy to hang around with, he had other things to do -- marriage, girlfriends, family matters. Dupa needed someone of his own level of economic destitution, and Vito needed someone like that too.

Vito looks over at Dupa and says, "So what's happening in this town?"
Dupa says, "What do you mean?"

Vito says, "I'm new in this town, and I gotta get me someplace to live, and a way to make money."

Dupa says, "Have you ever thought about collecting bottles and cans?"

Vito thinks for an instant of his father's days of doing that very same thing, and replies, "I'm not gonna do that kind of shit. I want to make fast money and hang around with fast people."

Dupa says, "The fastest people I see around here hang around in a couple of areas, and let me tell you what they are." Dupa thinks to himself that someone has finally recognized his minor intelligence. He has acquired a social significance. Suddenly he can be an expert. He's grown up in Lowell and lived there all his life. He tells Vito of the hot spots in Lowell.

"First of all, you got three strip clubs in Lowell -- the Three Copper Men on Fletcher Street, the Celebrity on John Street, and Nicky's on Gorham Street. Across the street from Nicky's is Tower News, the hot spot for decadence and lowered sophistication."

Dupa says he's heard Tower News needs somebody to work inside, cleaning up.

Vito says, "Cleaning up what?"

Dupa says, "Cleaning up stuff that needs to be cleaned."

Vito says, "Are you sure they need somebody?"

Dupa says, "Yup, I'll take you down there if you want."

Vito says, "Okay." Then Vito says, "You ever smoke real cigarettes, kid? You know, like Marlboros." Vito smoked Marlboros when he had the money to buy cigarettes.

Dupa says, "Nope."

Vito says, "Well kid, if I get this job, I'm going to buy a pack of Marlboros, and we're gonna smoke like brothers."

Vito got that job at Tower News. A year later Dupa found out he had throat cancer, and had a laryngectomy, and lost the use of his voice. Thanks to Dupa telling Vito about the job at Tower News, and becoming his

confidante, Vito stuck by Dupa before and after the operation. This would be a bond and trust that would last the rest of their lives.

Vito started selling drugs, Dupa was his delivery guy. Later Vito would work at the Celebrity. Later still, he became the kingpin in Lowell of soiled women's panties.

Nick D (of Prophecy)

This adventure could not have happened without the collaboration of Nick D, one of Lance Gargoyle's closest and most trusted friends in music and in life.

At one time in Nick's life his appearance resembled Alec Baldwin in *Miami Blues*. Nick never had the evil attitude of Junior (the part Baldwin played), but he sure had that survival attitude at one time in his life. He went there, he came back, he went there again, and he finally, hopefully, came back for good.

Lance Gargoyle met Nick D in 1983. Dan the Man Santana, a jamming buddy of Lance's, told Nick when he came back into town, "You gotta meet this guy Lance Gargoyle." Nick D played guitar very well. He enjoyed jazz and played jazz very well, and was very polished.

At that time Lance lived at 231 Appleton Street on the third floor, across the hall from his best buddy, Dave Rawlings. Lance lived in apartment #10, and it had a roof outside its only window. It was a single room, with slanted ceilings because of the roof. Lance would sit out on the roof in the summer time because it was cool. When Dan came over with Nick and introduced him to Lance, Lance knew right away that he would become a valuable ally. Not only did he enjoy jazz as Lance did, but he enjoyed Lance's music. Nick started stopping over regularly, and he and Lance became good friends. Nick met some other musicians that Lance knew, including Dave Id, and later got interested in industrial type music. Nick liked to hang around the neighborhood a lot at night. It turned out that he would sometimes be picking up hookers.

He had just come back from living in California for the past eight years. He was a wild man, like Lance. The hairiest arms and hairiest chest you've ever seen. Nick was always smiling and in a good mood, always goofing on life. He had a Dodge Dart, slant six. Eventually he started to work at the hospital where Lance worked, in the supply room. Eventually he would leave and work as a delivery person.

Lance and Nick had a number of adventures. One was when some hookers had stolen some of Lance's musical equipment. Lance had let his guard down and for a moment trusted the nobility of the human race. He knew where one of the hookers hung out in Salem, New Hampshire. Nick D and Lance drove up there. They parked outside the house, and Nick D said he'd get out and check it out. Lance saw him walk up to the door, and then go inside. After a few moments, Lance got out of the car, and went inside too. Lance asked Nick, "What's up?" Nick said, "Nobody's home -- I'm looking for your guitar." Nick and Lance were searching the house of some guy they didn't know while he wasn't home. They quickly looked around, then left.

Lance would never forget the daring that Nick D showed that day -- he was a true friend.

Lance would go down to where Nick D was living on Lawrence Street. Nick would record Lance doing his "monster songs," which were his vocal tunes. Nick was not only an excellent guitarist, but also extraordinarily capable in recording.

Nick had had his Class One tractor trailer license since he was eighteen. He started to drive for Poopoo Propane. He made good money. He had used heroin sparingly in the past, while he was in California. He did it occasionally when he came back to Lowell. Now he was doing it more regularly -- too regularly. He was making terrific money, making long hauls, but he got laid off, and he started using more and more. His unemployment ran out. He moved into 231 Appleton Street. Lance lived downstairs, and was the manager of the building.

Nick lived there for a couple of months, and eventually had to leave. He knew he was bringing too much heat down on the building. Nick wasn't the type of junkie that would hang around with other junkies. Only just to find the new locations where he could cop. A lot of times Nick was speedballing -- coke and heroin. Nick was bringing heat on the building, and this was putting a strain on his friendship with Lance. He ended up moving out and going into detox.

After that Nick's life went down the drain a little bit more. Nick D had always talked about decadence, and now he was living it. Living in abandoned buildings, taking copper wire from abandoned buildings, like the Gilmore Building on Middlesex Street. He'd cash it in at the junkyards on Tanner Street. But his big thing was -- shoplifting. CDs, anything small. He was in another world now, a world of junkies, decadence, and more decadence. He was a little bit ashamed of what he had become, and didn't want to face his friends.

For a while he lived with Emil Beaulieu, of Emil's Eccentric Records, but that didn't work out. Emil also performed industrial music, and he jammed with Nick D, sometimes in clubs as "Due Process." They made recordings when they lived together, but that's another story, that happened before where we are now.

So now Nick is wallowing in decadence. He had that hungry, on-the-edge look. His face was pitted with sores. He exited from society.

After several years of this, Lance bumped into Nick again. Nick was always evasive, like a shadow. Lance could never track him down. But now he had found him, and they hooked up. Lance had a lot to tell his best buddy Nick D. Lance had moved, and was now creating music on a Korg o1w fd keyboard musical workstation. Lance had started to create the music of his dreams -- abstract, experimental music, multilayered, multertextural, multitracked compositions. Lance loved his music. The year was 1993.

Nick stopped up to see Lance and hear some of his music. Nick got on welfare and moved into Lance's new building. Nick had been diagnosed with the AIDS virus. He got on welfare, and then he applied for social security. The

welfare money helped him get into the building that Lance lived in, across the hall from Lance.

Lance had started doing coke once in a while, before he and Nick hooked up again. Eventually Lance convinced Nick to cop for him. Lance would do ten or twenty dollars worth at a time, never wanted to go out more, which is the norm. Nick would sometimes be content with a twenty, but sometimes would want more, and want to get some heroin too, to go with it. Lance never wanted to meet these people who sold the drugs, and he never did. Lance would drop Nick off in the neighborhood, and meet Nick around the corner. Sometimes they'd have to go to four place before the found something.

The thing with coke is, first you're counting how many days you did it, and then you're counting how many days you didn't. A little was never enough for Nick, and he never had enough money, and he would shoplift. He had got caught one or two times in the past, and now he got caught again for the third or fourth time. One of those times he was arrested, because he got caught stealing the copper from the buildings. In any case, when he got caught shoplifting, he eventually got sentenced to nine months in jail.

By now Nick had been approved for social security, had gotten a big check, bought some things, and was broke and shoplifting. I don't know how long he was in jail -- maybe it was only three or five months. Lance held his apartment for him, and took care of his checks. Lance visited him once, and he would write Lance once in a while.

Eventually Nick got out. He was all right for a while, but eventually he got into the same routine again. For courtesy's sake, Nick D moved out again. He got caught shoplifting, and screwed up his probation, so he went to jail again, I think. A couple of years later, Lance bumped into Nick again. He had been off drugs for a couple of years, and was getting his life together again. That was a couple of years ago -- Lance hasn't seen him since. But he's sure he's still doing good, cause Nick D always had that core of goodness and genuine concern for humanity, and he was a good guy.

Someday Lance is going to bump into Nick D again. Maybe in Lowell. Lance knows his last known residence was in Somerville. His mother lives in Lowell, but she can't find his address. Nick, if you're out there, Lance still has some of those recordings, baby, of you and him jamming, and some day, people are gonna hear some of the music of Nick D and Prophecy.

Freddy Rockefeller: "That's fucking money -- I'll find a way."

Mike of "Mike and the Spikes"

One quality that people would never say that Mike of "Mike and the Spikes" would ever exhibit, was what Lance Gargoyle would term, "vanity overload."

Mike was Lance Gargoyle's first and only guitar guru. They met at Solomon Mental Health on Varnum Ave in Lowell. Although Sidney Hipple is the primary candidate for past mental health issues, Lance had a short stint at Solomon himself. Lance met Mike one day in the piano room. Mike was playing a little piano, and Lance started to talk to Mike about music. Lance had brought in his hollow body bass guitar. At that time Lance wasn't really a competent or polished musician. Oh yeah, he could sing pretty good, and he could always create some musical expressions on the bass -- but he didn't have any training.

Later on that day, after Mike and Lance met, Lance let Mike play his bass guitar. Mike could play it as a bass, or as a guitar, much better than Lance. But Mike being the humble guy that he was, didn't act all uppity. He was just playin', man. He was groovin' that groove. Lance thought to himself, "This guy is pretty talented, and it appears that he has at least a half a brain in his head." But overall he was a good person. They talked about jazz. Mike showed Lance the major chords on the piano. They became fast friends.

Mike was a little out there at times. But not so far that Lance didn't know where he was heading. Eventually Lance and Mike got out (of Solomon Mental Health). Not at the same time. But they got out. Lance would never go back, but Mike would make many more appearances over the years.

When Lance got out, he got on welfare, and lived in a one-room on Summer Street, the white building. If you ever go to Lowell, and go on Summer Street, you'll know what building it was. It's abandoned now. Years after Lance moved out, they put chicken wire on the downstairs window so people wouldn't break in.

Lance never lived on his own before, and he had never been good with money. Someone stole his food stamps, and he had no money. Sometimes Mike and Lance would sneak in the lunch line at Solomon. The cafeteria people would assume that they were day patients. Sometimes a friend of theirs, a drummer named Roger Mono -- he had been in Solomon in the past too -- would go in the line with them.

None of them ever had money. They used to go into an outreach program of Solomon called the Renaissance Club. Patients and ex-patients used to hang around there when it was open. They had free donuts, and coffee was only a dime. Roger, Lance, and Mike were always bumming cigarettes. Roger always acted like the slickster -- he'd see a young woman walking down the street, need a cigarette, and say, "Hey babe, got a butt?" Although he rarely got any women, he had that self-confidence that Mike and Lance lacked, bumming from strangers.

After Lance smashed his hollow body bass against his radiator, Mike sold Lance a hollow bodied guitar that only had the four bass strings on it. That was all Lance played for a long time. If you're a real musician and you

want to really play, you'll play anything that you got.

Mike showed Lance the simple blues, bar chords, and a couple other tricks that they could jam together. Eventually they recorded some songs together: "Vibrator Blues" with lines that said, "She's a girl who loves a vibrator / Even in the refrigerator / Every time I call or date her / She says I'll see you later."

Lance and Mike had a number of adventures. There weren't too many genuine people that Lance found to hang around with in Lowell. But Mike was a guy that Lance could trust.

One of their adventures involved hitch-hiking from Lowell to Salem, New Hampshire to donate blood for money. They walked a good portion of the way. Early on, when they first started out walking along the road, Mike would pick up cigarette butts off the ground to smoke. Lance only smoked Marlboros. Sometimes Mike would find a Marlboro that wasn't smoked too much, and Lance, dying for a cigarette, would accept.

So they're walking along. Mike is always looking on the ground.. Sees something wrapped in tinfoil. He picks it up and opens it. It was pot. Lance enjoyed smoking pot. Mike was primarily a wine drinker, so he rarely smoked much pot. Walking along, Lance got a little bit of a buzz.

After three or four hours they finally got to Salem, New Hampshire, to the blood donor place. For some reason, they denied Mike -- maybe it was his extra, extra Bohemian appearance and attitude. Maybe his blood was fucked up. But they took Lance. Now the two of them had fifteen bucks and some pot. The first thing Lance did, was buy a couple packs of cigarettes.

They started walking and hitchhiking home to Lowell. They walked a long ways. Finally, walking on 495, the traffic had slowed down so much that they were walking faster than the cars were moving, and somebody let them in and gave them a lift.

You know that four string hollow body guitar that Lance bought from Mike for fifteen dollars? It took Lance four months to pay him off. Sometimes Lance would duck Mike because he would feel guilty about not having any money. Mike was the type of guy that wouldn't have cared anyways.

Eventually Mike got a one room apartment at 73 Fletcher Street. He had all types of stuff in there that he found on the street. Big stereo consoles that parts of it worked. Eventually Lance got a job as a pot washer at St. Joseph's Hospital, but they paid him every two weeks. In between pay periods, Lance would bum food stamps from Mike. Sometimes Lance would try to pay Mike back, but Mike didn't care anyways.

After a couple of years of working at the hospital, and becoming the stock clerk for the kitchen, Lance drifted away from his old friends. He had developed friendships with people who worked at the hospital, and as time went on, he hooked up with other musicians from Lowell. Dan Santana -- Lance and him formed a group called "The Distortion Brothers." Lance played chords with a lot of distortion. Danny played lead with a lot of distortion. Another musician who came into Lance's scene when he lived at 231

Appleton Street was The Claw, Riff Graft. He always had a great guitar and great equipment, and loved playing lead and using the whammy bar. The friggin guy knew every conceivable scale there ever was to play on guitar.

Danny lived in the projects on Salem Street near the hospital. Danny's father was an older man. Danny would be wailing loudly on his Gibson, playing lead along with an album. His father would sit in the kitchen like it didn't even affect him.

Sometimes Mike would stop by and visit Lance, but he'd always want something, and look decrepit. Lance still had an ugly side back then, a selfish side. One day Mike stopped over to visit -- he'd gotten hit by a car, and his arm was in a sling, and he was bruised pretty badly. Mike just wanted someone to talk to. Lance knew Riff Graft was on his way over to play guitar. Lance had Mike sit in the closet the size of a phone booth, hidden away when Riff came over. Mike never thought it was any big deal, but later on, Lance would feel like "Maybe I shouldn't have fuckin' done that to Mike."

Lance felt he was entering into a new productive phase in his life. Mike's lifestyle seemed almost primitive to Lance. And remember, Mike was the type of guy who would have given Lance the shirt off his own back. Maybe Mike reminded Lance of his desperate days in Lowell, that he wanted to forget. Because Mike had continued to go in and out of the hospital, Solomon, Lance felt that Mike would never leave that ugly cycle of institutions and nut juice.

After a couple of years, Mike stopped by and saw Lance. He had a job, a car, and a girl friend. He was washing and delivering automobiles at a dealership with his brother worked. He had been regularly taking medication, and his erratic moods had stabilized.

Couple years later, Mike was off the medication and back to his old self. Like Lance, Mike felt that the medication, or as they called it, the nut juice, severely altered a person's creativity, and the side effects always made you look like a goon. Your tongue would twist, your thoughts would still be racing a mile a minute, but your body didn't go no place, you felt lazy. That's why Mike never liked taking medication.

Eventually Lance surrendered his self-importance towards himself, and was more open to Mike's presence and situation. He even lived in Lance's building on Appleton Street for a while -- three different times, three different landlords. But Lance learned to live with the quirks of his good friend Mike, cause deep down inside, Mike was a humble, genuine guy who never ever had a bad word to say about anybody, even if they ripped him off. Okay, he might bitch a little bit, but he'd soon forget about it.

Mike always liked wine. He had got accepted for social security benefits, and would spend most of the money after he got it on the first of the month. Mike would always be working on something. He'd have a couple of TVs in his room, with the chassis removed. The TVs would be somewhat working. Mike hung around with some real characters. Ditch Dooby for one.

Lance could usually put up with Mike for about six or seven months, before Lance would start to lose it. Mike would have no sense of time.

Banging and building on the floor at three o'clock in the morning was not unusual for him. But they always remained friends. Mike would get on anybody's nerves, and he knew he got on Lance's nerves after a while.

Years later Mike would even live in the big building, the undisclosed building that Lance lives in now, that people can't know about because they'd bother him. Mike was regularly doing crack when he got his check, for a couple of days anyways. Lance would have Mike help out around the building that they lived in, and that Lance managed. Mike could make a couple extra bucks vacuuming the hallway, cleaning a refrigerator or a stove. Mike was meticulous and impeccable in his cleaning, for many years anyways.

Lance had adjusted to Mike and his ways. One month while he was waiting for his check to come in, he built a friggin acoustic guitar from scrap wood. He made a guitar neck, and went to Russo's Music and got some frets to put on it. It played and looked good, and Mike never had any fancy tools to work with either. But the first of the month came around, Mike got his money, got some crack, and smashed the guitar. Oh shit, I forgot -- Mike was always getting good guitars, or at last decent-playing guitars, and smashing them, or throwing them into the canal. The friggin guy had talent. His fingers were luck Gumbie when he played the guitar neck, the way they'd twist around to make a chord. He was a character, I'll tell you that.

Eventually the building got sold and Mike, who as usual was behind on his rent, had to move. Lance wouldn't see him too often. Mike got arrested for urinating on the side of a building, and although it was a criminal matter, they put him in Tewksbury Hospital, where he remained for over a year. Lance went to visit Mike a couple of times, and it was a trip. This wasn't like the old carefree days a Solomon Mental Health. Most of the people in Tewksbury weren't going to ever come back. But Lance knew that Mike would. And eventually he did get released, under the condition that he go to a half way house and take medication, or nut juice.

Lance always stops whenever he sees Mike riding his bike around town, or walking around town. They always have a good chat, and Lance always makes Mike feel like he's the most important person in the world, and certainly a member of the human race. Lance remembers when Mike lives in the building and would sometimes be talking to himself in his room. Lance would knock on his door and give him something to eat. Most of the time that's all he needed. Or someone to talk to. Lance found out for Mike, as for most people, the three basic requirements are -- to feel a part of society, if you want to call it that, or humanity, what it really is -- the three requirement are: something to eat, something to do, and someone to listen to you once in a while.

Lance learned a lot from Mike, not just a couple of guitar chords. He learned about genuineness and humbleness and understanding. You know when Mike was living in 73 Fletcher Street on welfare and food stamps, what he said to Lance one time? "The same people you see going up the ladder, is the same people you see going down." Mike will always be rememberd by

Lance as Mike of "Mike and the Spikes." Although nowadays Mike is on the nut joice and unable to be as creative as he once was, but I'm sure in that halfway house, if they let him, he still working on something in his room. He talks about being trapped in that zombie environment with the other residents, but he's gonna make it. He got hit by a car and got a lawsuit, and got hit by a car other times and didn't get a lawsuit. But he always came back with that zest and gusto, and that enduring conviction that even if life sucks right now, chances are it's gonna get better when the check comes in at the first of the month.

Lance Gargoyle

The Saga Continues

Lance was always jamming with people at the *Rialto*. He had had that big night on Halloween with Quigley, Juan, Dave and Ed Id, and, oh, I forgot, Nick D was on stage too, doing the industrial stuff. The Rialto was on downtown Central Street, across from the Copper Kettle. Downstairs was a bowling alley. The building was owned by a guy named Dominic -- at least he ran the bowling alley and collected the rent for the rehearsal rooms that were upstairs.

Next to the first floor entrance, a locked door leading into the hallway of the rehearsal area was another another door that went to the massage parlor. Yeah, Lowell still had them. The door would be open, and you'd walk by, and it smelled like a combination of sweat, perfume, maybe a little semen, and who knows what else coming out of that door. None of the musicians who played in the rehearsal rooms ever went downstairs. But during breaks guys would be looking out the side window in the hallway, seeing the young women going to work.

Who knows what the lives of those girls were? Who knows how long they had been doing it? Who knows they would be doing it? Soon, in a couple of months the massage parlors were gonna close. The chicks were too classy to go on the street. Would they become exotic dancers? Would they meet a guy with enough money and understanding, and maybe a little pizazz? Probably not. There's too many losers out there looking for women that don't have any real dreams. When you're involved in that life, somehow you go inside a shameful place. 'Cause after all, you ain't gonna tell your family or people who may respect you that you work in a massage parlor. Maybe they'd be in porno books, maybe some of them already are. Maye they'd go in porno films. But most likely they're gonna end up hooked up with some loser that doesn't feel nothin'. And if they think they find religion, then they really become a zombie. Especially if they're the type who couldn't be an Amway salesperson, so they get involved with New Age bullshit. Okay, okay, maybe some of them meet a decent guy out there. But the rest of 'em just become a different type of zombie.

So anyways, let's talk about the bands and the happenings up there in the practice rooms. In the beginning, Lance shared a room with Riff Graft. The rent was like \$89 a month, and you could go there any time you wanted, and fucking jam. Dave the drummer shared a room across the hall with Danny. Funky Dave was the best drummer Lance had ever played with. We'll call him Funky Dave, because he played in a funk band at one time. Actually, it was disco, but for the record, let's say it was funk.

Lance used to have jams once a week. It would be Funky Dave on

drums, and Johnny B on guitar or bass, oh, and of course, Lance Gargoyle, guitar, maybe a little bass, and a little keyboard thrown in for good measure on the side. You could start a rhythm, and Funky Dave would pick it up and groove with it, and throw small embellishments in almost like a sixth sense. Sometimes it was John on bass and Lance on guitar. Sometimes Lance did some vocals, and sometimes Johnny B did some vocals too. They'd get together around 7 o'clock on a Tuesday night. Johnny B would arrive with a bottle of wine, a wine glass, and his guitar and amp. Dave would bring his drum set over from his room into Lance's.

Lance could always think of something simple, but interesting to play, that both of the guys could follow along with easily to explore and improvise through. Lance used to record all the jams and practically everything that he ever did, live or at the Rialto with whoever he'd be jamming with at the time. They used to have a great time.

Across the hall in one of the big front rooms, was a heavy metal band. Not so much heavy metal -- kind of like Rush. Lance had been jamming with a couple of years with two young musicians, Jamie Walsh and Dave Glasswetter. Jamie played guitar and Dave G played bass. At one time before the Rialto, Lance had jammed with them and another young drummer named Wayne. They even played out at this high school musical exhibition with a large audience. That was weird for Lance, who was older at that time than the other guys. They jammed for a while, but drifted apart, when Porky -- I mean, Wayne, that was his nickname -- went into the service, and they didn't have a drummer. Lance showed Jamie some simple blues chord structures, and some other standard four- or five-chord wonders. Lance could play lead.

So anyways, after Lance had had the rehearsal rooms for a while, he changed over to a big front room facing Central Street, and Dave and Jamie got a room together beside his. You could have the window open on the Friday night in the summertime, and be jamming at 11 o'clock or later, or even just playing alone or practicing.

At this time in the history of the Rialto, Funky Dave would jam with Lance inside the practice room. Funky Dave was always a humble guy -- one thing that Lance always looked for. He always wanted to get in a band that played out and made money, as he had done in the past.

The band across the hall was a real friggin heavy metal band -- two brothers. Now this is back around '82 or '83 that I'm talking about, and these guys had the big hair, the Marshall amps cranked up so that you couldn't even hear yourself across the hall. They were always doing coke, and had coke whores up in the practice room. Those guys were a trip.

Dominic, the owner, even actually let a relative live in one of the rooms. You got to remember, these rooms didn't have any sink or nothin'. The bathrooms were down the hall, and believe me, sometimes they could get real roguey, especially when a toilet wasn't working, or somebody got sick in the bathroom. Lance took it upon himself to clean the toilets for Dominic for free -- at least he could have a clean shit when he wanted it.

Eventually the Rialto closed and Lance had to go back to rehearsing in his patio studio at 231 Appleton Street, on the third floor. The hallway bathrooms in the building were never really very clean, and Lance offered to clean them. Wait a minute, let's back up a little bit. This building used to be owned by a little old lady -- yeah, I said a little old lady. A guy at the City approached her when she was behind on her taxes. A guy named Bub. He told the lady that he'd have someone that would buy it from her, and she wouldn't lose the house. It was his common law wife. They got the building friggin dirt cheap. At that time, in the late 70's, for maybe not even \$20,000.

When Lance moved into the building in '78, Bub and his common law wife Carol lived downstairs in the three-room apartment that had its own side entrance. They used to fight like wild. Carol would be screaming at the top of her lungs, "Bub, I want to go!" Carol would probably have a little buzz, but Bub would be cocked, and say in a quiet sinister voice, "Where you gonna go, Carol?" Carol would be whining and say, "I just want to leave, Bub."

At that time, Carol would enter the rooms once a week to clean them and change the linen. They always knew the appearance of their building and the tenants' rooms. No one could live with anybody in the single rooms that were there. A number of times Bub found out someone was living with somebody, and actually threw their clothes out on the sidewalk and locked them out. Once his wife had changed the sheets and found some panties there. Bub went bananas. Sometimes at night he'd bang on Lance's door, because Lance played his TV too loud.

Eventually Bub and Carol moved to another place that they had, and Bub's daughter and son-in-law moved into the old place and collected the rent. They used to fight like hell too, and scream and holler and have the cops come down, but things were a little looser in the building. Eventually Bub sold the building to a guy named Vinnie who owned a lot of property in Lowell at once time. Vinnie was a good guy, and renovated the hallway and all the rooms the best he could. They had panelling, everyone had a sink and a little refrigerator and a stove. Eventually the building got sold to another property owner named George H. This guy was an alright guy. His sons Geoff and Glen also did repairs and renovations on the building.

This is the time when Lance started to take care of the building for George. He vacuumed the hallway twice a week, and cleaned the two common bathrooms. George took five dollars off his rent. Lance always did a good job, as he did with everything he took on. After four months, he asked for a five dollar raise. George said, "Nope, but I'll give you two dollars more a week." After maybe another six months to a year, Lance got tired of tenants that were such slobs that he hold George he didn't want to go the bathrooms anymore. One guy named Kenny was shitting in the upstairs bathtub.

George made Lance the manager. Now Lance's job was interviewing applicants and showing the vacant rooms, and collecting the rent -- besides keeping the place in good order. Lance began to learn about people's character and behavior. It isn't easy to be a good judge of character or behavior. Basically you look for someone who's gonna be able to pay the

rent, that don't mind living in one room. Even at \$40 - \$50 a week -- which were the rents back then, in the mid-80's.

George was a good guy, and so was the rest of his family, including his wife, Barbara, who Lance talked to on the phone sometimes when he had problems. Things were going pretty good for Lance. He worked at the hospital downstairs as a materials handler. He had started off as a pot washer at Saint Joe's Hospital, and after eight months had become a stock clerk for the kitchen. After four years he transferred to central stores and became the supply clerk. Eventually he would transfer to the receiving area, and remain there for many years.

One day Lance got home and he found out that George had sold the building to three police officers. He found this out because they turned off the gas to transfer the meter to the new owners, but the new owners hadn't hooked it up yet. Lance called George, and found out that the building had been sold. The three police officers came over the next day to meet Lance, the manager of the building. One of them named Tom asked Lance how long he had lived in the building, and Lance told him, twelve years. Tom said, "You're the manager."

Lance rarely saw the other two police officers and mainly dealt with Tom, who was an alright cop. It was good having three cops own the building, because Tom would knock on the tenants' doors when they got behind on their rent, or a drug addict had slipped through, and Tom would tell them to get out.

The three cops also bought a building in Centerville from George, which had thirty-one units. They offered Lance to manage it. Lance refused, because he didn't want the extra work, and because he didn't want to leave -- believe it or not, the neighborhood, or the building. After a couple of years, the old die downstairs in the two-room apartment called Whitey went to a nursing home, and Lance got that apartment. Now he had his own bathroom. All nine other tenants had to share the bathrooms that were in the hallway.

They got some crooked bizzbong named Jerry to manage the bigger building in Centerville on Christian Hill. He was found out, and Tom got rid of him, and brought in Lance to manage that building also. Lance didn't want to do it, believe me -- the traffic crossing that bridge all the time. That building became a trip for Lance. They all had their own bathrooms, and it was a higher, yet someone seedier type of character that applied for the vacancies. The rents were higher over there. Lance had a little bit of interviewing savvy under his belt from his experiences at Appleton Street, but this would become a whole other level of judgment and acceptance according to social ability. Two things Lance used to think to himself when interviewing prospective tenants: Are they going to be able to pay the rent? and Will they vacate easily if they do get behind on their rent?

Those three guys got suckered on that friggin building, and they could never make the payments or the utilities. After Lance had been managing the place, Tom came and told Lance that they were gonna go bankrupt. A sly tenant named Frankie who had been the on-site manager at 11th Street was

there when Tom told Lance the news. It would be a couple of months before the bank would take it over. Frankie had been doing a lot of coke, and was getting sloppy and using rent money which Lance had to finagle or pay himself. Lance decided this was the time to move into the building and become the manager. He left 231 Appleton Street after 18 years. Spazz Gasket became the on-site manager at Appleton Street when Lance moved into the Christian Hill building, into the largest studio apartment there.

The bank had the building and let it go to shit -- they never fixed nothing. Lance had always been buying new equipment. He had a bass. At one time he had an authentic B C Rich Flying Eagle, a good Les Paul copy which he still has today, and a copy of a son of a Rich. In the 80's he started to use a Casio keyboard which a good friend of his named Jimmy the Roadie had loaned him. It was the size of a computer keyboard. This keyboard had auto-accompaniment. It played the drums, the bass, and played a chord when you pressed a key. After a couple of years, he got a Lowry keyboard that had the same features, but was better. He picked up a full-size keyboard from Nick D, and when he moved into the Christian Hill building, he purchased another keyboard, a Korg 01WFD. It cost over \$2000, and Lance financed it for two years. It had a disk drive, and Lance could save all his music on disk now. He created multi-layered, textural arrangements and multi-track sequences with this keyboard.

George, the original owner that Lance had worked for, bought the building back, and he and his son Geoff did a total renovation and upgraded everything in the building -- new roofs, all the studios were expanded and totally renovated. All the people who applied for studios had a credit check done. Lance had learned that interviewing, scrutinizing, inner-sensing capability of knowing people's behaviors. That, and the credit check, and George and Geoff's sensibility in choosing tenants for the building made it a haven for Lance. They did all the repairs -- all he had to do was collect the rent, take care of the grounds and the carpet inside the building, and interview prospective tenants during the week.

Things were going great in Lance's life now. He had a suitable life situation -- a good job that left him the weekends off, a home that was quiet and safe, he had begun learning acting from a famous acting teacher in Newton, and had recently purchased another music workstation called a Korg I-3. This also had a floppy disk, and had superb auto-accompaniment that Lance utilized to make his music go farther than it had ever gone before. Recently Lance purchased another Korg keyboard music workstation (an upgrade of the I-3 series) called an I-30, which Lance uses primarily to create his music today. Sometimes he still plays guitar, once in a rare while. He used to like that wild feedback crunchy sound that you got from guitar. Now he gets it from his keyboards. He's done a lot of vocal things and a lot of vocal songs as people know, and is always creating more musical designs with his keyboards and his voice and his imagination. He's been acting a couple of years now, and has been in three or four student plays at Southwick Studio. He's studied improvisation styles from Keith Johnstone,

Marjorie Burren, other improvisational techniques, and currently is seriously involved in Action Theater and improvisational techniques developed by Ruth Zaporah which he studies with her and other people whenever she comes to town. He's been doing it for a couple of years, and he plans on developing an improvisational group called the "Orchestra of Life" based on a sound Stomp-like movement and sound and the principles of Action Theater and utilizing his Korg keyboards. He's in the process of developing a website with his newly discovered friend Sidney Hipple, another performance artist who makes sculptures from sea weed and sea objects and currently does online painting.

So get ready for Lance's music and vocals and musical improvisations, stories and instrumental music, and Sidney Hipple's art gallery aptly named, "The Charles Bukowski Memorial Online Art Gallery." And of course, this story. And that's all you need to know for now.

Vanity overload

The Orchestra of Life